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Tuesday, September 16, 2008

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Sep 16, 12:25 PM EDT

DetroitNews.com

Michigan Senate responds to 9-year-old boy's death

By DAVID EGGERT

Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- The Michigan Senate has passed bills in response to the death of a 9-year-old boy who was killed by his father in a rural county northeast of Grand Rapids.

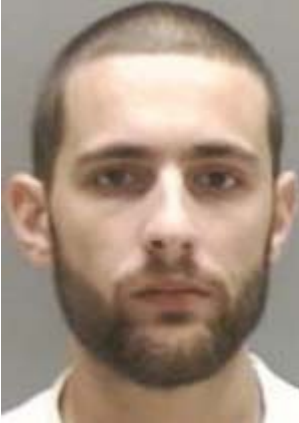
State officials have said they didn't do enough to protect Nicholas Braman. He died last year when his father used a combination of an over-the-counter pain medication and carbon monoxide gas to kill his new wife, the boy and himself.

Legislation approved Tuesday would require the state and family courts to better communicate about suspected child abuse.

State caseworkers intervened to protect the boy's older siblings from child abuse inflicted by their father. But Nicholas continued living with his father after the boy and his brothers said he hadn't been mistreated.

Grand Haven man charged with first-degree child abuse

Posted by [Terry Judd | The Muskegon Chronicle](#) September 15, 2008 21:48PM



Steve Rouiller Jr.

A 23-year-old Grand Haven man has been charged with first-degree child abuse after medical authorities reported treating a 4-month old boy for a fractured skull last week.

Steve Rouiller Jr., 608 S. Ferry, was arraigned Monday in Ottawa County's 58th District Court on a felony child abuse charge that carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison. Bond for Rouiller was set at \$50,000 cash or surety by District Judge Richard Kloote. Rouiller was to have a pre-preliminary examination this morning.

According to the Grand Haven Department of Public Safety, Rouiller has been charged with severely abusing his son, Landon J. Rouiller, over several days. Authorities were notified last week of a suspected child abuse case when North Ottawa Community Hospital personnel treated the infant for a fractured skull.

The boy is a patient at DeVos Children's Hospital, which is not releasing information on his condition.

Appearing at a video arraignment Monday afternoon, Rouiller told the court he had been laid off from a restaurant job and would have to have a court-appointed attorney. He said he lived in the same home as his wife and son. Kloote noted Rouiller had been in district court before.

According to court records, Rouiller pleaded guilty in 2004 for filing a false police report, pleaded guilty in 2005 for aggravated domestic violence; pleaded guilty in 2006 to retail fraud and possessing alcohol as a minor.

Public Safety officials said they were contacted by NOCH and Child and Protective Services officials after the infant was brought to the hospital last week. Their investigation revealed the infant had been allegedly abused several times in his Grand Haven home, police said.

FREE PRESS EXCLUSIVE

Parents cleared in sex case file suit

Our autistic kids suffered, they say

BY L.L. BRASIER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

Thal Wendrow was at her mother's home when the police came to get her. Four West Bloomfield patrol cars pulled up to the curb. Her husband, Julian, at their home a few blocks away, also was being arrested that day last December.

The couple, who had no criminal history, suddenly faced decades in prison. He was charged with repeatedly raping their 15-year-old, severely autistic daughter, and she was charged with child abuse for failure to stop it.

Thus began a four-month ordeal, a prosecution based solely on statements their mute child reportedly made while using a widely discredited method called "facilitated communication," in which messages are typed on a keyboard with the help of an aide called a facilitator.

Thursday, the Wendrows, who saw all charges against them dropped in March, filed a lawsuit in Oakland County Circuit Court, alleging 38 counts of wrongful imprisonment, invasion of privacy, violation of their due-process rights, malicious prosecution and other misdeeds. Lawsuits on behalf of their daughter and her 13-year-old brother, who was repeatedly interrogated by police, are expected to be filed today.

They are seeking unspecified damages.

'It doesn't get much worse'

"It was as if our lives were pristine, and then this tornado tore through and devastated everything," Thal Wendrow told the Free Press on Thursday at the Bloomfield Hills office of her attorney, Deborah Gordon.

Julian Wendrow, who spent 80 days in jail without bond before prosecutors dropped the case, is furious.

"My son was emotionally raped by the state, and my daughter was clinically and emotionally raped by the state. I felt so helpless," he said. "You're supposed to protect your children, and these malevolent no-gooders kept me from them."

Gordon called the case "horrific."

"It doesn't get much worse. They literally broke up a family," Gordon said. "These people are out of control. We're hoping this lawsuit stops this insanity."

Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca and his chief assistant, Deborah Carley, named in the suit, did not comment Thursday. Assistant Prosecutor Andrea Dean, who handled the case, also is named in the suit, along with the West Bloomfield Police Department and Joseph Brousseau, the detective who interrogated the couple's son.

Lt. Carl Fuhs, the department spokesman, who is also named in the suit, did not respond to a call for comment.

The Walled Lake school district and several employees also are named in the suit because the girl reportedly made the statements in a classroom, with the help of a paraprofessional who was guiding her hands. A school spokesperson said Thursday that the district had not seen the suit and would have no comment.

Also named as defendants are the Oakland County Sheriff's Office and the state Department of Human Services.

Facilitator hopes go wrong

The Wendrows were living a seemingly simple life in December 2007. Julian Wendrow owned his own painting company. Thal Wendrow worked as a research clerk for Oakland County Circuit Court. They were active at their synagogue and involved in their children's schooling.

Both children had been diagnosed with autism. But their daughter was, by far, the more impaired, with a low IQ and an inability to speak. Their son, two years younger, was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a milder form of autism.

Although facilitated communication had been widely discredited by major universities and researchers, the Wendrows were hopeful it would help their daughter and insisted that Walled Lake schools train a paraprofessional to become a facilitator.

In November, the girl reportedly typed a statement accusing her father of raping her since she was 6, and claiming that her mother knew of the assaults but did not stop them.

A physical exam showed the girl's hymen was intact. But prosecutors pushed forward with the case.

Fallout changes family

Within days, the girl was placed in a foster care home in Detroit, and the boy in a Pontiac facility for delinquent minors, even though he had no history of trouble.

Thal Wendrow was released on a tether after five days in the Oakland County jail, but Julian remained for weeks.

When the couple's daughter was unable to answer questions on a keyboard in March during a courtroom demonstration to determine whether the alleged facilitated statement would be admissible in trial, prosecutors decided to drop the charges.

The girl, now back in school, shows signs of anxiety much of the time, her mother said. And the boy is struggling with his studies and prone to tears.

"This should never have happened," Gordon said. "The prosecutors... just couldn't let it go and own up that they'd made a terrible mistake."

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

Macomb briefs

DetroitNews.com

Warren: Missing infant, father return

The 1-year-old Warren boy whom authorities believe was abducted by his father Sunday afternoon was returned safely late Monday afternoon, Police Commissioner William Dwyer said. Warren detectives made contact on Monday morning with the infant's father, Frank C. Deitsch Jr., who indicated he was in Cincinnati with relatives. Detectives were able to convince him to return to Michigan with his son -- Frank Deitsch -- after a custody hearing was arranged, Dwyer said. He arrived at the Warren Police Department with his son around 3:40 p.m. Monday. Child Protective Services has temporarily taken the child into custody until an investigation is completed.

Court Docket: Trial date set in murder case

SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

LivingstonDaily.com

Man enters plea to abusing son

A Sterling Heights man pleaded guilty Monday in Livingston County District Court to abusing his toddler son. Michigan State Police alleged Mark David Rodgers, 25, struck his 2-year-old son in the back of the head hard enough that the little boy's head hit a patch of concrete. The incident occurred in Livingston County.

Rodgers was charged with third-degree child abuse, a two-year misdemeanor, but he pleaded guilty to fourth-degree child abuse, which is punishable by up to one year in the county jail. He also pleaded guilty to driving with a suspended license.

Sentencing is set for Oct. 20 before Judge L. Suzanne Geddis.

Botched adoption sparks outrage; Genesee County judge threatens to jail Whaley Children's Center officials 'next time'

by Ron Fonger | The Flint Journal

Monday September 15, 2008, 8:23 PM

GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan -- A county Probate Court judge is threatening to send officials from Whaley Children's Center to jail in the future after the nonprofit failed to do work required to clear the way for the adoption of an 11-year-old boy.

Judge Jennie E. Barkey said she plans to meet this week with the new chief executive officer of the Flint-based Whaley, which cares for some of the state's most abused and troubled children.

Barkey last week ordered the boy removed from Whaley, fined the home \$1,000 for contempt of court, and warned: "Next time, whoever's the head of Whaley is going to go to jail."

The judge had ordered in June that the boy, who had been suicidal, have a medication review and behavioral assessment -- part of the process required before he could be adopted.

But twice last week, Whaley representatives came to court without having finished either the review or the assessment of the 11-year-old, who has been a ward of the state Department of Human Services since late 2004 after his birth parents' rights were terminated.

Daryl Vanella, named president and CEO of Whaley in August, said he will meet with Barkey and acknowledged "the ball was definitely dropped here."

But Vanella, Whaley's fourth top executive in less than four years, said the mistake isn't the kind of thing that happens routinely and isn't being ignored.

"Internally, we have processes in place that were not utilized," Vanella said. "The employee said she was taking care of things, and she wasn't. This is an isolated incident with that particular worker."

Vanella said the employee was disciplined, but would not discuss the case in detail.

The Flint Journal could not immediately reach Rande' F. Wright, staff attorney for the Child Advocacy Team, which represents children in the county's Family Court system.

On a video recording of the court hearing last week, Wright says he can't explain why the work wasn't done by Whaley for his 11-year-old client.

A Whaley representative on the tape says that the boy waiting for adoption had a medical review scheduled for Aug. 25, but "got bumped" by another child in crisis, preventing the adoption from being completed.

A news release from Whaley announcing Vanella's recent appointment said the new CEO has more than 20 years of experience working with at-risk children and families and cites his track record in "turning around failing residential treatment programs" and "leading residential treatment programs through leadership transitions."

About Whaley Children's Home:

- **Location:** 1201 N. Grand Traverse St., Flint
- **History:** A Flint institution, Whaley was founded in 1926 with money bequeathed by Robert J. Whaley, whose 11-year-old son, Donald, died in 1880. Donald Whaley had been saving money to give to an orphanage in Detroit at the time of his death. Robert Whaley directed that the children's home was to provide care for homeless and neglected children.
- **Purpose:** Houses and provides treatment for children, most of whom are permanent wards of the state of Michigan and who have been victims of neglect, physical abuse and poverty.

Zeeland family honored at White House for adopting HIV-positive child

Posted by [destep](#) September 16, 2008 05:40AM



Press Photo/Dave Odette Rob and Christa Murphy with their children, from left, Acacia, Katriya, Isaiah and Christianna. The Murphy's adopted Isaiah when he was an HIV-positive orphan. With medical treatment available in the United States, the virus is now undetectable in him.

ZEELAND -- A few years ago, Zeeland doctor Christa Murphy watched a Zambian mother and her young son waste away and die of AIDS.

Not long before the boy died, Murphy looked into the child's eyes.

"He just stared past me with hollow eyes. My heart was really broken," Murphy said.

Not long after, Christa, 33, and her husband, Rob, 38, decided at least one HIV-positive Zambian child would not suffer the same fate.

Today, they are the proud parents of Isaiah Murphy, 2, a Zambian orphan they adopted in December.

A boy once likely to die by age 3 is now healthy, smiling, and with no sign of the virus.

"There is just a lot of hope when you see him," Christa Murphy said.

The Murphys are to be honored for their commitment today at the White House lawn, part of the annual Angels in Adoption ceremony. Nominated by members of Congress, recipients from all 50 states are recognized for giving permanent homes to children in need.

"When you have a family like this who makes a decision to adopt a child, it just sends out such a positive message," said U.S. Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Holland. Hoekstra nominated the Murphys.

"People in these other countries, they notice that Americans are not going over and taking the healthy kids."

For the Murphys, their journey toward Isaiah began with a trip to Zambia in 1996.

"We decided we would like to spend a year somewhere serving in another culture. We ended up in Zambia and just falling in love with the Zambian people."

Nine years later, they were back on another mission trip, this time with two daughters of their own. The Murphy family today includes three biological daughters, Acacia, 8; Christianna, 5; and Katriya, 2.

Christa Murphy, a family practice physician, encountered a woman at a hospital in northwestern Zambia in the late

stages of AIDS. The Murphys were there as part of World Medical Missions, the medical arm of the international relief organization, Samaritan's Purse.

"She was lying on her back. She didn't have the strength to sit up," she recalled.

About a month later, the woman's 5-year-old son was admitted with severe malnutrition. He was emaciated, his eyes sunken, his body defenseless against infection.

"It was really too late for him," she said.

In September 2007, Rob Murphy returned to Zambia with a team from Grand Rapids-based Bethany Christian Services.

"I got a call from the orphanage that said they have a little boy. They asked if we wanted to adopt him."

He was able to spend a few hours with him before returning home. Murphy learned his background: Born in June 2006, he contracted the virus at birth. His mother died of AIDS. His father was reported to be unable to care for him.

Left to the Zambian medical system, he would have been lucky to survive past age 3.

But as their adoption date approached, the Zambian government sent out mixed signals about whether it would continue to allow international adoptions.

The Murphys boarded a plane in December with no certainty the adoption would happen.

"He was actually the last child adopted out of Zambia internationally at the time," Rob Murphy said.

When they brought him home, Isaiah had 475,000 copies of HIV per milliliter of blood. Thanks to a cocktail of antiretroviral drugs not generally available in countries such as Zambia, the virus today is undetectable.

The Murphys expect a long and productive life for their son.

"His prognosis is very, very beautiful. The data says there is no reason he can't grow up and have a family and not pass HIV on," Rob Murphy said.

The Murphys hope others see the same need they witnessed in the eyes of a child.

"These kids are dying, five a minute every day. We really have to do something," Rob Murphy said.

E-mail Ted Roelofs: troelofs@grpress.com

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September 15, 2008

Vote fair coming to Livingston County

BY DAILY PRESS & ARGUS STAFF

The Livingston County Department of Human Resources will be hosting a voter registration fair on Sept. 17.

The "Vote Fair," provides a chance for residents to register to vote in time for the Nov. 4 election. The deadline to register to vote for the general election, is Oct. 6.

The fair is designed to inform registering voters on all aspects of voting - even how to cast a ballot.

The event will be from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m at the Livingston County Department of Human Services on 2300 E. Grand River, Suite 1.

For information visit www.michigan.gov/dhs



Mount Pleasant, Mich., woman gets probation in candy-selling scam

Posted by LaNia Coleman | The Saginaw News September 15, 2008 19:27PM

MOUNT PLEASANT -- One year of probation and 200 hours of community service await a Mount Pleasant woman whose children hornswooggled do-gooders into supporting bogus charities.

Isabella County Circuit Judge William R. Rush on Monday sentenced Joanne Walters after the 29-year-old pleaded guilty to single counts of committing fraud under false pretenses less than \$1,000 and contributing to the delinquency of minors.

Walters also must pay restitution in an amount not yet determined.

Investigators claim that for a year starting in June 2007, Walters used a state-issued bridge card to buy candy, then had her 11-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter sell the products for profit door-to-door in Gratiot and Isabella counties under the pretense of raising money for charity.

The state Department of Human Services issues bridge cards in lieu of food stamps.

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Democrats push Medicaid bump as economic stimulus

By Jennifer Lubell

From Modern Healthcare

Democratic lawmakers at a teleconference once again pushed for an increase in the share of federal Medicaid payments as a way to stimulate the economy.

In Michigan, the Medicaid rolls “are exploding” with people, which is burdening the economy along with the high unemployment rate and high gas prices, said Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who joined Sens. Carl Levin and Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, in the teleconference.

The purpose of the call was to discuss an economic-recovery package that would lower energy costs, create better-paying jobs and invest in infrastructure. Although the idea of increasing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages, or FMAP — the federal government’s shared fiscal responsibility of each state’s expenditures for Medicaid — was mentioned, it’s not clear if such a provision will appear in an actual economic stimulus bill.

An increase to the FMAP would be beneficial, as more demands are being placed on Medicaid, said Brown, who also emphasized the importance of tax extensions and unemployment compensation as tools to create new jobs and increase confidence in the economy.

House Democrats earlier this year proposed a bill to increase the FMAP’s allotment to states but were unsuccessful in their attempts to move the provisions as part of an initial stimulus package.

Levin said that he hoped Senate Republicans would support the Democrats’ stimulus package.

“Republicans are seeing what we see and feel in our own states. ... Whether we’ll get enough (support) to overcome a filibuster is always a question in the Senate.”

The Medicaid component of the stimulus package is being considered, but no details have been finalized, according to an aide to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Project Access off to healthy start

Posted by [mlammi](#) September 16, 2008 10:51AM

A local program that provides health care for the growing number of Jackson County uninsured has made a more than \$2 million impact through donated services in the last 18 months.

So far, it has allowed more than 400 area residents to have access to health-care services and prescriptions at little or no cost, said Dr. Brian Adamczyk, executive committee chairman for Project Access.

The program started in March 2007 as a collaborative effort with area nonprofits and the medical community, including about 127 physicians, who donate time and resources.

It aims to provide comprehensive health care to uninsured, low-income adults who are not eligible for other assistance.

Learn more

For more information or to enroll in Project Access, contact Central Michigan 211 by dialing 211 from a land line in Jackson County or by calling 796-4511.

"It is trying to address the needs of a group of people who don't have access to medical care," said Dr. David Halsey, president of the Jackson County Medical Society, which is a partner in Project Access. "We want to act as a safety net to protect these people until they can get something on their own."

Though it has focused on serving the uninsured working poor, those who are unemployed may also be eligible, he said.

Program organizers encourage involved primary-care and other physicians, which range in specialty, to take on about 10 patients a year, Halsey said.

He said it gets the uninsured the preventative care they need, rather than being forced to turn to an emergency room, where care is more costly.

"You couldn't tell the difference between a Project Access patient and someone who has the best Blue Cross coverage in the world," Adamczyk said.

Though the program has served a few hundred since its inception, thousands more could be eligible, Adamczyk said. It currently has the ability to serve about 500 people.

In April, an Allegiance Health case manager estimated between 12,000 and 16,000 of the county's residents do not have health insurance.

The hospital, along with the Community Medication Assistance Program, the United Way of Jackson County, Central Michigan 211, LifeWays, the Center for Family Health and the Jackson County Community Foundation, are also involved in the program.

Adamczyk said he estimates the program will provide more than \$3 million in care by March.

"It's only going to get bigger," Adamczyk said. "It will hopefully continue to expand and develop."

Categories: [Breaking News](#)

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Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Edward Woods III (517) 373-7394

DHS hosts more than 50 Voter Registration Fairs across the state to help empower Michigan residents

September 15, 2008

The Michigan Department of Human Services' offices in 57 counties will host voter registration fairs to help register Michigan voters. Representatives of the League of Women Voters of Michigan, a city, township, or county clerk, or other community organizations will be at many locations to assist individuals attending the events. The deadline for registering to vote in time to cast a ballot in the November 4, 2008 general election is October 6, 2008.

DHS clients and local residents participating in a voter registration fair can receive information on all aspects of voting and register to vote. At some sites an AutoMark machine is available to individuals who would like hands-on practice casting a ballot. An AutoMark is a special voting machine designed for persons with disabilities. Anyone can try it out at a fair and any voter may use it on election day, upon request.

"Hosting statewide voter registration fairs demonstrates the department's commitment to comply with the National Voter Registration Act, Section 7 and supports DHS' efforts to empower citizens to register to vote," said DHS Director Ismael Ahmed. "Voting gives every Michigan resident a voice in the political system and provides the opportunity for an individual to participate in all levels of government."

While many Michigan residents are aware that the DHS assists children, families, and vulnerable adults to be safe, stable and self-supporting, they may not know that DHS district and county offices are also designated voter registration sites. If a DHS client or local resident cannot attend one of the scheduled voter registration fairs, they can always register to vote at one of the DHS local offices during their regular operating hours.

"Participating in the political process is important," Ahmed said. "Your voice matters; please register to vote."

For more information on dates, time and places of the Voter Registration Fairs, please consult the following link www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-Voter-Registration-Fairs_249033_7.pdf

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Colleen Steinman (517) 241-5678

Governor Granholm Declares September as Infant Safe Sleep Month All caregivers urged to learn about protecting infants as they sleep

September 15, 2008

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has declared September as Infant Safe Sleep Month in Michigan, an effort to help all people who care for babies to provide a sleeping environment that protects them.

An interagency team, including Tomorrow's Child, the Michigan Public Health Institute, and the state departments of Human Services, Community Health and Education, has pooled resources to focus on preventing infant deaths. Along with the Web site www.michigan.gov/safesleep, instructional DVDs, posters, brochures and public service announcements are being used to educate parents, grandparents, day care provider and others who care for the youngest children.

"Everyone who might care for infants should take a few minutes to learn safe sleep practices," DHS Director Ismael Ahmed said. "These simple recommendations will help prevent the tragic loss of an infant's life."

Safe sleep recommendations include the following:

- Babies should sleep alone in a safety-approved crib with a firm mattress and tightly fitted sheet.
- Babies should sleep on their backs.
- No soft objects, blankets or bumper pads should be placed in the crib.
- Babies should be kept warm using sleep clothing rather than blankets.
- Babies must sleep in a smoke-free environment.

"Our primary goal is to save the precious lives of our babies," said Michigan Department of Community Health Director Janet Olszewski. "Parents throughout Michigan now have a great resource – Michigan's Safe Sleep guidelines – to ensure that babies are safe and protected when they are put to sleep. Safe sleep practices give children a healthy start in life and it reduces the state's mortality rate."

The Child Death Review Teams in Michigan reviewed 128 deaths in 2004 that were attributed to sudden infant death syndrome, suffocation in bedding, and unknown causes in sleep environments. On average, one to two infants die each week in Michigan as a result of unsafe sleeping practices, according to Heidi Hilliard, project coordinator for MPHI's Child Death Review Program.

"Unfortunately, Michigan babies continue to die at an alarming rate in unsafe sleep environments, Hilliard said. "We all need to work together as a state and in our communities to help families ensure that their babies are sleeping safely."

Well-meaning grandparents and other caregivers may rely on outdated practices and may unintentionally mislead or confuse new parents looking for guidance about providing the best care for their children.

"We want everyone to know and practice the safe sleep steps," said Sandra Frank, executive director of Tomorrow's Child/Michigan SIDS. "Partnership among our public and private colleagues is the best hope of reaching every Michigan family with this lifesaving message."

For more information, please consult the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs or www.michigan.gov/safesleep